CHAS-37
SOCIETY HILL (Frailty; Walnut Hill)
Mt. Victoria
Private

Society Hill, which has had several major renovations in its 200-plus year history, is one of Charles County's more interesting examples of eighteenth century architecture. The original, onestory, five bay house with dormered roof was distinguished by a massive chimney of a design similar to those of Maxwell Hall (CHAS-196), differing, however, in that it had an arched doorway in its base allowing access between the house and a semi-detached kitchen. In the early 19th century, the house was raised to two-storys and front and rear porches added in a manner similar with that which occurred at Deep Falls in St. Mary's County (STMA-71). At this time a second chimney was added to the south end to service the southwest first floor room which had been extended into the rear porch area. In the early 20th century, the original kitchen was replaced by a shed roofed addition at the south end of the house. At a later date the windows were altered by the insertion of a middle window between the two windows flanking each side of the east door, and doubling the end windows of the second floor level on both sides of the house. The interior, which has a center hallfour room plan, retains some early features, including a fine Georgian-style mantel in the principal first floor room. Fragments of chairrail and other trim indicate that the interior of the house was once very handsomely finished.

Society Hill stands on a 17th century land grant known as Frailty surveyed in 1664 for Captain Humphrey Warren. The oldest part of the house was probably built by Warren's grandson, Barton Warren, between 1730 and 1757. The house commands an impressive view of the entire Wicomico River from its situation on the crest of a hill.

### MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

CHAS-37

# INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY (中面井田田村)

1 NAME				
HISTORIC	SOCIETY HILL (F)	cailty; Walnut	Hill)	
AND/OR COMMON				
2 LOCATION				
STREET & NUMBER	East side of Mt.	Victoria Road	on Society Hill 1	Lane
CITY, TOWN		VICINITY OF	CONGRESSIONAL DIST	
STATE		VICINITY OF	COUNTY	
	aryland		Char	cles
3 CLASSIFICA	TION			
CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRI	ESENT USE
DISTRICT	PUBLIC	XOCCUPIED	X_AGRICULTURE	MUSEUM
	X <sub>PRIVATE</sub>	_UNOCCUPIED	COMMERCIAL	PARK
STRUCTURE	_BOTH	WORK IN PROGRESS	EDUCATIONAL	
SITE OBJECT	PUBLIC ACQUISITION IN PROCESS	ACCESSIBLE YES: RESTRICTED	ENTERTAINMEIGOVERNMENT	
	BEING CONSIDERED	YES: UNRESTRICTED	GOVERNMENT	SCIENTIFICTRANSPORTATION
		X <sub>NO</sub>	MILITARY	_OTHER:
4 OWNER OF	PROPERTY			
NAME	Charles Wegner		Telephone #:	
STREET & NUMBER	Society Hill		zozopnono "·	
CITY. TOWN			STATE	zin code
	Mt. Victoria	VICINITY OF	Maryland STATE,	21p code
5 LOCATION	OF LEGAL DESCR	IPTION	Liber #: 157	
COURTHOUSE.			Folio #: 548	
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ET	Charles County	7 Courthouse	rollo ".	
STREET & NUMBER	Charles Street	(P.O. Box B)		
CITY, TOWN	La Plata		STATE Marylar	nd 20646
6 REPRESENT	'ATION IN EXIST	NG SURVEYS		
TITLE				
DATE				
		FEDERAL	_STATE _COUNTY _LOG	CAL
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS				
CITY, TOWN			STATE	
		· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·		

CONDITION

CHECK ONE

CHECK ONE

\_\_EXCELLENT
XGOOD
\_\_FAIR

\_\_DETERIORATED
\_\_RUINS
\_\_UNEXPOSED

\_\_UNALTERED

X\_ORIGINAL SITE
\_\_MOVED DATE\_\_\_\_\_

#### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Society Hill is approached by a gravel road approximately eighttenths of a mile in length between the Mt. Victoria Road entrance
and the house. After passing through woodland and cultivated fields
to the house the road continues through the farm to the Wicomico
River. The house is impressively sited on the crest of a ridge and
faces east-southeast, commanding a superb view of the lower Yatten
lands, the Wicomico River and the St. Mary's County shoreline beyond.
Except for a few largely unobtrusive newer structures, it is a view
that has remained basically unchanged for over one hundred twentyfive years.

Although extensively renovated and altered by previous owners, Society Hill, originally the principal manor house on Frailty, a 17th century manor grant, is one of Charles County's most interesting and significant examples of early eighteenth century architecture.

The Society Hill of today is a two-story frame house with front and rear porches, exterior brick chimneys and a shed roofed kitchen wing at the southeast end. Its present exterior plan, except for such early features as two of the three chimneys, some first floor wind and sash, and beaded siding on the front and rear walls, is the culmination of two basic renovations; one dating from the early nineteenth century and the other from the middle of this century. Despite the extent of the renovations, there is sufficient physical evidence to establish its basic original appearance and trace its evolution to its present form.

Believed to have been built circa 1700-1730, the house began as a one and one-half story structure with a steeply pitched dormered roof. The east front was five bays in width, having a centered entrance door with transome flanked by two windows on each side. The west side was evidently four bays wide, having two transomed doors, one occupying the first bay from the northwest end and the other a near central position, a window between them and a second window toward the south end. At each end of the house stood a single exterior chimney, the one at the south end being very broad at the base and rising in two graduated tiers to the attic gable where it continued up in the form of a wide, free-standing stack. A narrow arched doorway in the chimney base presumably led to a detached kitchen dependency.

Society Hill was built over a full, brick walled cellar partitioned into several rooms. The larger east room, equipped with a commodious cooking fireplace, functioned as a winter kitchen. (The original summer kitchen, now destroyed, was housed in a separate building located not far from the south end of the house.) Three small windows equally spaced the length of the side walls and fitted with we grilles provided light and ventilation. The cellar had two entrances, (continued on attached sheet)

. ERIOD	AF	REAS OF SIGNIFICANCE CH	IECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW	
PREHISTORIC 1400-1499 1500-1599 1600-1699 X_1700-1799 X_1800-1899 X_1900-	ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORICARCHEOLOGY-HISTORICAGRICULTUREARCHITECTUREARTCOMMERCECOMMUNICATIONS	COMMUNITY PLANNINGCONSERVATIONECONOMICSEDUCATIONENGINEERINGEXPLORATION/SETTLEMENTINDUSTRYINVENTION	LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE LAW LITERATURE LMILITARY LMUSIC PHILOSOPHY POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	RELIGION SCIENCE SCULPTURE SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN THEATER TRANSPORTATION OTHER (SPECIFY)
SPECIFIC DAT	ES	BUILDER/ARCI	HITECT	

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Society Hill, which has had several major renovations in its 200-plus year history, is one of Charles County's more interesting examples of eighteenth century architecture. The original, one-story, five bay house with dormered roof was distinguished by a massive chimney of a design similar to those of Maxwell Hall (CHAS-196), differing, however, in that it had an arched doorway in its base allowing access between the house and a semi-detached kitchen. In the early 19th century, the house was raised to two-storys and front and rear porches added in a manner similar with that which occurred at Deep Falls in St. Mary's County (STMA-71). At this time a second chimney was added to the south end to service the southwest first floor room which had been extended into the rear porch area. In the early 20th century, the original kitchen was replaced by a shed roofed addition at the south end of the house. At a later date the windows were altered by the insertion of a middle window between the two windows flanking each side of the east door, and doubling the end windows of the second floor level on both sides of the house. The interior, which has a center hall-four room plan, retains some early features, including a fine Georgian-style mantel in the principal first floor room. Fragments of chairrail and other trim indicate that the interior of the house was once very handsomely finished.

Society Hill stands on a 17th century land grant known as Frailty surveyed in 1664 for Captain Humphrey Warren. The oldest part of the house was probably built by Warren's grandson, Barton Warren, between 1730 and 1757. The house commands an impressive view of the entire Wicomico River from its situation on the crest of a hill.

TELEPHONE

STATE

645-6537

Maryland

#### 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

STREET & NUMBER

CITY OR TOWN

#### CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY **10** GEOGRAPHICAL DATA ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY \_\_ VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION Society Hill is located on a 354 acre tract of land identified as parcel 17, Map 83 of the Charles County Tax Maps (revised January, 1976). LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES STATE COUNTY COUNTY STATE TIFORM PREPARED BY NAME / TITLE J. Richard Rivoire, Consultant DATE ORGANIZATION February, 1978 Charles County Planning Department

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 267-1438

Charles County Courthouse

La Plata

## Continuation of #7 (Description) -- SOCIETY HILL Page 2

one beneath the main stair of the house (later relocated) and the other, an exterior entrance, positioned to the left of the fireplace in the east room. It is probable that the cellar floor was initially paved with brick, as appears to have been a standard treatment when cellars served a functional purpose other than that of storage. However, no evidence of this has been discovered. The existing floor is of packed dirt and gravel.

It is possible that the existing center hall plan of Society Hill is original. However, the extensive later alterations could have included a change in the initial room configuration. Since center hall plans were not widely used in the region at the time Society Hill is believed to have been built, it is not inconceivable that the original plan followed the then regionally popular arrangement of two large front rooms with two small rear rooms and a centered rear stair hall. This plan, prevalent from the end of the seventeenth century through to the third quarter of the eighteenth century, was often later altered to the center hall plan by installing a partition wall in the largest of the two front rooms. One of the best area examples of this conversion is <u>River View</u> (circa 1730; NR) in St. Mary s County. Of the existing rooms only the large "closet" enclosing the main stair is known to be unaltered. Although the stair itself was rebuilt following an apparent fire its configuration, consisting of broad, steeply winding steps, repeated that of its predecessor. A second stair of similar plan was located beneath the main stair but was later removed and relocated. An unusual and possibly original feature of the existing first floor plan is the small northwest room which is only accessible from the exterior and is believed to have initially served as the plantation office. There is a complete lack of information regarding the original attic plan. Since this area was confined to the interior dimensions of the roof, it probably contained only two or three small bedrooms. The present second floor plan includes four bedrooms as well as a small room at the front of the stair hall that has been converted for use as a bathroom. Two of the bedrooms have fireplaces framed by late eighteenth-early nineteenth century mantels.

Although much of the existing interior woodwork is of twentieth century date and of an extremely plain design, there are several mantels that are considerably older. One, in the north first floor room (the present living room) has a crossetted surround below a high frieze decorated with reeded end blocks. Beneath the molded cornice shelf is a Greek fret. The mantel, stylistically dating from the second half of the eighteenth century, might have been installed during a pre-1800 renovation. It is very similar to the mantel in the principal room of Mt. Pleasant (circa 1790; CHAS-208) in the same county. The remaining mantels all appear to date after 1780, although only one, the mantel in the present dining room, has moldings of a distinctly eighteenth century type. Fragments of chairrail, found by a previous owner, relate stylistically to the mantel in the first floor north room. Of a three-piece design they have a face molding decorated with evenly spaced reeded squares. The artistic merit of the chairrail and mantel indicate that the interior of Society Hill was once very handsomely finished.

(continued on attached sheet)

## Continuation of #7 (Description) -- SOCIETY HILL Page 3

Precisely when the existing front and rear porches were constructed remains undetermined. It is possible that they are original since porches of this basic type are known to have been used in the region since the early eighteenth century. Discernable physical evidence suggests that the porches have been on the house at least since the early nineteenth century.

The exterior of the house appears to have been initially sheathed with random width beaded boards. A substantial portion of this sheathing, hand planed and secured to the wall studs with wrought nails, survives below the porch roof of both side elevations. Of the four original or early windows that survive, all frame sash of nine-over-nine panes. However, the sash itself does not display the wide muntins characteristic of the early and mid-eighteenth century and were perhaps installed at a later date. These windows, as well as the door of the front elevation and the two doors and original window on the rear side, have two piece surrounds consisting of a beaded face board to which was applied a narrow outer molding. The outer molding is of a profile suggesting a late eighteenth or early nineteenth century date.

In about 1825-40 the gable roof of the original house was removed and the house raised to a full two-story height. At or about this time the south first floor room was enlarged and extended into the porch Additional alterations included the apparent removal of much of the eighteenth century woodwork. A major alteration occurred to the southeast end, creating the odd combination of chimneys and doors so often pictured in publications on Maryland architecture. is evidence to suggest that when the house was enlarged a former pent or fireplace at the west end of the original south end chimney was removed and a door inserted in its place. The opinion that the existing flat headed doorway is not contemporary with the construction date of the chimney is based on the presence of jagged broken brick surrounding the opening. It was also about this time that a frame wing, connecting the house to the formerly detached kitchen, was constructed. It is thus reasonable to assume that the door was cut through the chimney to provide access to the wing. When the first floor south room was extended into the porch, a second chimney was built against the west side of the existing south end chimney. The determination that the two chimneys were constructed at different times is based on differences in masonry and design. The elongated stepped weathering (shoulder) on the west side of the southwest chimney, for instance, is a distinctly late eighteenth and early nineteenth century design element. A peculiar feature of the same chimney is a recessed shelved area in its back wall--Yatten has a very similar chimney on the east end of the circa 1840 main block--whose original purpose or function remains undetermined. It is possible that the shelved area was originally a fireplace serving the nineteenth century wing that stood here and that it was later altered to its present form. Physical obstructions and layers of paint over the brick prevents a thorough analysis of this particular area.

Little is known of the wing that stood between the house and the (continued on attached sheet)

## Continuation of #7 (Description) -- SOCIETY HILL Page 4

kitchen, nor is anything known of the origin and physical appearance of the kitchen other than that it was a frame structure with an exterior brick chimney. Although evidence of the foundation of the wing and kitchen survived as late as the 1940's, little remains today. Nevertheless, archeological excavations in the area would undoubtedly reveal the dimensions of the wing and kitchen and perhaps provide evidence as to their construction dates.

It is believed that Society Hill retained its early nineteenth century appearance until the 1940's when it again experienced several alterations. It was at this time that the two pairs of windows flanking the front (east) door were altered to their present triple unit design by the insertion of a third window between them having the same basic detail and sash. Additional windows were also installed across the second floor of both side elevations, creating three bays of two windows each. The west window of the west porch was also similarly enlarged. It was also about this time that a substantial portion of the interior woodwork was replaced, the main stair rebuilt and the cellar stair relocated. Most of the framing of the two porches was also replaced and a modest shed roofed kitchen built on the site of the former kitchen-service wing.

There are no other pre-1900 structures remaining on Society Hill, although there are undoubtedly numerous archeological sites. In addition to the main house there is a tenant house located close to the entrance drive, several barns and sheds, and a small 1902 dwelling near the river.

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10A	(Type all entries - complete applicable sections	.1	ENTRY NU	MBER	DATE
	NAME	>/			
98x8x800	COMMON:				
	Society Hill				
	ANO/OR HISTORIC:				
2.	LOCATION				
	STREET AND NUMBER: Mt. Victoria Road			· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	
	CITY OR TOWN:				
	Mt. Victoria				
	STATE COOE C Maryland	OUNTY:	narles		CODE
3		C1.	191 162		
3.	CLASSIFICATION			ACCE	SSIBLE
	(Check One) OWNERSHIP		STATUS		PUBLIC
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	Site Structure Private In Pracess		Unaccupied	Restri	
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7.	DESCRIPTION				Maria I				
	CONDITION			HOLE STORY OF	(Check On	0)			
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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

A charming two storey dwelling with a fine view of the Wicomico Valley Society Hill possesses a shallow A frame roof and massive chimneys at its south end. A one storey porch runs the length of the east elevation front, while the porch runs only two thirds the length of the rear wall as the dining room projects out onto the porch.

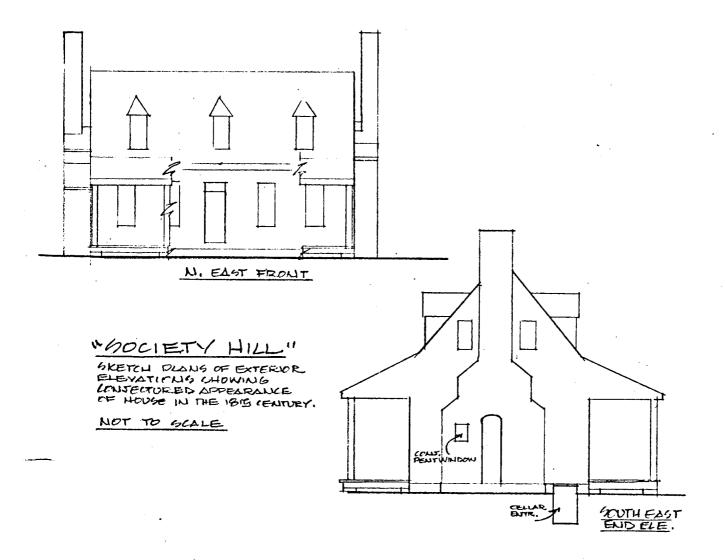
On the first level front the house has triple windows one set to each side of the center door. All windows at this level are nine over nine sash. At the second floor level are those sets of double windows at one at either end and a single window at the center.

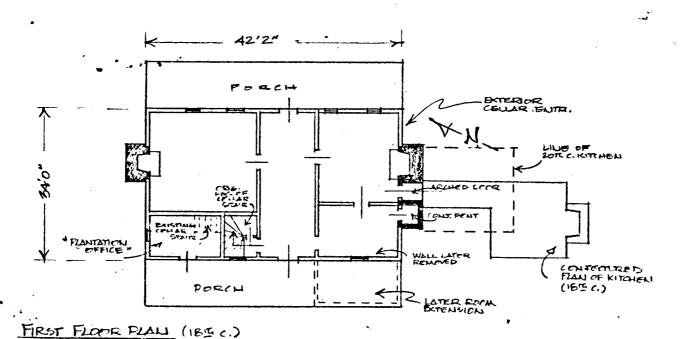
There is, at the north end, a single exterior chimney with free standing stack. The chimney is positioned off center to the roof ridge. At the south end are two chimneys of rather unique designed. Joined at the base the chimneys differ in size. The chimney to the east being double hipped while the one to the west, somewhat smaller. There is a vaulted passage the depth of the chimney and the width and height not much larger than a standard door. Where the chimneys join is another door with a flat arch. One of these doors leads into what is called the dining room (that room which projects onto the west porch) and the other door leads into the southeast front room. It is known that there was an outside (detached) kitchen from the south end of the house which hides disappeared sometime during the early years of this century. A photograph of these chimneys, minus the present wing which hides this unusual feature, can be found in H. C. Forman's "Early Manor and Plantation Houses of Maryland."

Most of the interior of Society Hill her been renovated since the latter half of the nineteenth century-but enough remains to tell of its former self. Two outstanding features are the two original mantles of the northeast Greate Room and the smaller southeast room. There is a full cellar beneath.

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J. RICHARD RIVEIRE, 1918



CHAS-37
SOCIETY HILL; East Front.
J.R.Rivoire, 1978



SOCIETY HILL: SW END ELE.

J. R. Rivoire, 9/1978 CH-37



CHAS-37
SOCIETY HILL; View From S.E.
J.R.Rivoire, 1978



CHAS-37
SOCIETY HILL; North End
J.R.Rivoire, 1978



CH-37 P.65 58%

